2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



She is fifty or
159 more years of age, gets around well, is the oldest member of her household, and is primarily responsible for the total care of more than
[855] ten children, ranging in ages from two to sixteen years of age. Some of them are her own children; others are her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Six of them live with her, and four are left in her care during the day while their parents are away working. I had the pleasure
[123] of spending more than two weeks residing with Miss Deeley and her large family. I shared a large room with three of the girls and came to appreciate the effort that went into keeping that room clean and orderly at all times. No one was allowed to retire for the evening without a
• [515] bath regardless of circumstances. Most of the time, a fire was built around a large black pot in the early evening to heat the water for baths before supper was served. All the children were lined up and given baths in a number-three washtub, given their nightclothes, and served
[354] supper around a large handmade wooden table. Miss Deeley had not accepted electricity for her home, so a kerosene lamp was the primary source of light after nightfall. Mealtime was always a pleasure at this
[264] home. The last meal of the day often consisted of cowpeas and rice
[262] cooked and seasoned with "bone," or rice served with shrimp and other fish caught by the children during the day. There was always hot corn bread and molasses and a bucket of iced tea.

159 After meals were served, the children gathered around the open
539 fireplace, and Miss Deeley entertained all of us for hours until the fire died down and the sleeping children had to be carried to their beds. This woman was an avid storyteller. Her general procedure was first to get everyone settled. Then she herself could get comfortable in the place always reserved for her by the window. After poking around in the fire until she was satisfied that it was burning well, she would lean back in her chair, take a couple of good bites of tobacco, kept in her apron pocket, and then lift up the youngest child into her lap and begin to reminisce about happenings during the day. She had the ability to tell a range of stories, but she seemed particularly adept at hag, ghost, or other psychological thrillers. She traveled around much in her day as a migrant worker in Arizona and Colorado; she said she heard some of her stories around the campfires there. Others she had learned from her parents and grandparents, and still others she said she had just made up to keep the children entertained.

538 Miss Deeley was fairly strict with the children. Once she permitted
115 two of the oldest to go to the island store for some "sweet"; she spat